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U.S. National Security Concerns in Central America

The United States has critical national security interests in Central America. Only a real, enduring democratization process in Nicaragua would help to protect these interests in the long run. A democratically elected Government of Nicaragua, unlike Cuba and Sandinista Nicaragua, would not permit use of Nicaraguan territory by the Soviet Union or other forces hostile to democracy in the Western Hemisphere. The continued existence of the Nicaraguan Resistance, either transformed into a party participating in an open democratic process, or as a military force, if needed, serves to pressure the Nicaraguan Government to continue democratization practices and to perfect them so that they become permanent.

These critical national security interests build on three fundamental criteria of long-standing U.S. policy: that there be no Soviet, Cuban, or Communist bloc bases established on the American continents; that no country in the region pose a military threat to its neighbor countries nor provide a staging ground for subversion or destabilization of the governments in the hemisphere; that the Nicaraguan Government respect the basic human rights of its people including political rights guaranteed in the Nicaraguan Constitution and pledges made to the U.S.

They are:

- The security of North America is our top priority. A Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan military combination on our Southern flank would directly threaten our national

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- Our global military commitments. Such a hostile military combination to our south would force us to divert scarce military resources from our global commitments to develop regional military capabilities. It would pose a direct threat to our ability to defend Western Europe in the event of a Soviet invasion.
- Security of the Panama Canal. The Canal is the link between Caribbean/Atlantic and Pacific SLOCs. A hostile Nicaragua, bent on fomenting subversion, poses a major threat to Panama and hence Canal security.
- Democracy in Nicaragua and the region is vital. Sandinista consolidation would make democracy in Central America impossible and put it at risk throughout the region. For instance, this consolidation could cause a severe setback in El Salvador where the Duarte Government has heroically fought subversion. The

failure of democracy in Central America and the Caribbean would undercut democratic experiments in other third world countries. Our political influence in the international fora would decline.

THREATS

The existence of a Marxist-Leninist, i.e., Sandinista, government in Managua, is incompatible with our interests.

- The Sandinistas military forces, already significantly larger than those of neighboring countries, will expand rapidly in coming years. In the ten years after the Paris Peace Accords, Vietnam's armed forces doubled in size to 1.1 million and modernized; naval personnel increased 13 times to 40,000; tank numbers doubled to 2,000. The same pattern occurred in Angola, Ethiopia, and Cuba, which now has the largest and most capable military in the Western Hemisphere after the U.S. Using ratios similar to those of these countries, Nicaragua in a few years will have a standing army of more than 150,000, 300-500 tanks, and 100 plus modern combat aircraft.
- Once the Sandinistas consolidate their regime, intensified subversion in Central America and Panama, with Soviet and Cuban help, is inevitable. Nicaragua will become the arsenal of insurgency for the region. The Soviets started to foment revolution in other countries in 1917 and as the Afghan people know, haven't stopped; Castro started in 1961 and as the Sandinistas know, haven't stopped. The Sandinistas started in El Salvador in 1979. In May 1983, the report accompanying the Boland Amendment stated that, "This insurgency (Salvadoran) depends for its lifeblood - arms, ammunition, financing, logistics and command and control facilities - upon outside assistance from Nicaragua and Cuba." They haven't stopped.

Renewed Assistance to the Nicaraguan
Democratic Resistance

In Central America, President Reagan seeks the interdependent objectives of peace, democracy and economic progress. And, since 1980, Central America has seen a dramatic political transformation -- from a region of four dictatorships and one democracy to the reverse, to a region of four thriving democracies in which only Nicaragua remains a dictatorship. If the future of democracy, as well as peace, in the region is to be assured, Nicaragua cannot remain outside the democratic ranks.

A key force for democracy in Nicaragua has been the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance (NDR) which seeks to prevent the consolidation of Marxist Sandinista rule and seeks the fulfillment of the promises of democracy, human rights and pluralism the Sandinistas made to the OAS in 1979. U.S. support for the Resistance must be sustained if these goals are to have a chance of achievement.

We are now at a critical juncture. The Guatemalan Peace Accords signed by the five Central American Presidents on August 7 contain many of the elements necessary to bring both peace and democracy to the region. The Accords call for a cessation of insurgent hostilities and for a reinvigoration of the democratic process in the region, explicitly including freedom of the press, the right of free political association and free elections in all the countries of the region including Nicaragua. To that extent, the Accords are a positive step towards U.S. objectives in the region. In response, the Sandinistas have been compelled to make several moves in the direction of a freer, more democratic and pluralistic Nicaragua. We welcome those measures yet have sound reasons to retain a measure of skepticism.

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Obviously, it is too early to tell whether these newly adopted Sandinista measures are all that they seem to be or whether hidden in the background are some ulterior motives that vitiate them. We have also reason to wonder whether they are enduring steps not to be reversed in the coming months. Even under the best of circumstances, democracy will not suddenly come to Nicaragua on November 7. It will take time for the process to unfold even assuming Sandinista goodwill. Finally, given the rich historical experience on this matter, it is questionable whether an admittedly Marxist regime intends to implement and preserve these democratic reforms in good faith. After all, the Sandinistas have a track record of making solemn pledges -- the 1979 OAS promises, the Constitutionally-mandated 1987 municipal elections -- which they subsequently ignore. The Accords, moreover, do not have guarantees or sanctions to ensure enduring compliance with what the parties have freely agreed. Neither do the Accords, although a positive step in the right direction, fully cover U.S. security interests in the region as itemized in the Wright/Reagan Bipartisan Peace Plan. They do not address the growing Soviet/Cuban support for, and presence in, Nicaragua which aims to establish a Soviet beachhead on the mainland of this Hemisphere nor the rapid growth of Sandinista armed forces that destabilize the regional military balance, and threatens its democratic neighbors.

In view of all these questions, doubts and imponderables, it is reasonable to remain soberly skeptical. Prudence requires that we have an "insurance policy" to encourage Sandinista compliance with the terms of the Accords in a real and enduring

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The Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance has prevented consolidation of totalitarian power and has left the Sandinistas less time and energy to devote to external subversion. That the Sandinistas came to the table and signed the Accords is tangible proof of the effectiveness of the Freedom Fighters. As President Arias has stated, the Sandinistas had a clear choice: they either signed the Accords or they faced a continuation of the war. But sustaining U.S. assistance to the Resistance is our essential "insurance policy" -- the best guarantee we have that the Sandinistas will live up to the obligations they accepted when they signed the Accords and that U.S. security interests in the region will be protected. Without further assistance to the Freedom Fighters -- without continuing to pay the "premiums", -- our insurance policy will expire. The Sandinistas will have a free hand to implement only sham, Potemkin-village reforms, to squeeze out all opposition, to continue or revive subversive activities against their neighbors, making a mockery of the Accords.

We should bear in mind the historical lessons of Eastern Europe in the late 1940s and of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam in the early 1970s. The former reminds us that Marxist/Leninist regimes regard the sharing of power as a contradiction of terms, once given a free hand; the latter reminds us that agreements are not self-enforcing and depend rather on a balance of forces if they are to be maintained.

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For these reasons, the Administration will request a \$270 million package of renewed assistance over an 18-month period for the Freedom Fighters. Continuity of support requires that the vote take place between November 7 and Thanksgiving. The Freedom Fighters returned to their Nicaraguan homeland to fight for their freedoms with U.S. support and encouragement. It will be morally reprehensible to abandon them now while in the midst of a struggle they entered with active U.S. collaboration. Maintaining the pressure also requires that the next package of assistance necessarily include military resources. The assistance will continue until both sides conclude a negotiated agreement for a ceasefire in place. Once a ceasefire is in effect, only that support needed to maintain the integrity and capability of the NDR forces will be delivered. As the democratization process unfolds, civil and political rights are emplaced, and as the NDR combatants freely begin to reincorporate themselves into Nicaraguan society -- the best indicator that the democratization process is genuine -- support levels will proportionally decrease until all further assistance is terminated. Any remaining resources will then be redirected to strengthening the democratic processes underway within Nicaragua.

Any legislation must also address particular concerns we have. The Guatemalan Peace Accords do not contain complete or rigorous standards of what constitutes real democratization. Furthermore, it is left to an international body of uncertain reliability to determine whether even the standards of the Accords

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are met. And, since we are not a signatory of the Accords, U.S. security interests are not explicitly included in the Accords.

For all these reasons, the Administration's request for renewed assistance will include explicit reference to realistic criteria of genuine democratization; to essential U.S. national security interests in the region; and to our moral responsibility to the fighting men of the Resistance. Instead of leaving to an international body that excludes the United States the determination of whether these criteria and concerns have been met, the Administration will assert its right to make that determination. When introduced, the request for renewed assistance will also contain a blend of incentives and specifications including the circumstances under which assistance to the Freedom Fighters would be suspended; a provision to convert lethal funds to democratization purposes if the Accords are fully implemented.

The underlying justification for the request is that the Freedom Fighters brought us to where we are and, as an insurance policy, we need to continue funding them until we see concrete evidence that the democratic reforms in Nicaragua are real and irreversible, that the Freedom Fighters are being reintegrated into a genuine democratic process, and that the dangerous establishment of a Soviet-Cuban beachhead in Central America has been averted.

GENUINE AND ENDURING DEMOCRACY IN NICARAGUA

In order for a genuine and enduring democracy to develop in Nicaragua, it is imperative that the Sandinistas take the following mutually reinforcing steps:

I. RECONCILIATION

A. NEGOTIATED CEASEFIRE

A negotiated ceasefire between the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance and the Sandinista regime, subject to international verification is mandatory. The Resistance cannot be expected to lay down its arms unless it is a party to an agreement which was arrived at with their participation.

B. FULL AND COMPLETE AMNESTY

The amnesty cannot contain provisions excluding particular groups, e.g., excluding military elements of the Nicaraguan Resistance while permitting political elements to return. Demobilized forces must be allowed to reintegrate fully into both civil and political life. Exiled Nicaraguans living abroad must be allowed to return with full guarantees about their personal safety.

C. RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS

All political prisoners without exception or condition, including former combatants, should be released. An outside organization such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and other independent human rights observers should be allowed to monitor the process.

D. RETURN OF CONFISCATED PROPERTIES INCLUDING RADIO AND TV STATIONS

Economic sanctions applied against opponents of the regime must be lifted and confiscated properties returned.

II. DISMANTLING INSTRUMENTS OF COERCION AND CONTROL

A. SEVERING FSLN TIES TO ALL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

The FSLN's ties with the Armed Forces, Foreign Ministry, Ministries of Interior and Justice and other government agencies should be severed so that the agencies of the Nicaraguan government are responsible to and representative of the entire Nicaraguan people, not just a single political party.

- B. USE OF SECRET POLICE AND MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OFFICIALS TO HARASS, INTIMIDATE, JAIL, TORTURE, SPY, AND CONTROL POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND DISSENT SHOULD END.

For example, the extraordinary powers of the special tribunals and of the police forces to conduct trials, decide appeals and sentence individuals should be rescinded. Use of the "turbas divans" should end.

- C. ABOLISH SANDINISTA DEFENSE COMMITTEES

The Sandinista Defense Committees that spy on citizens through informants and who can coerce citizens because they control access to essential government services and ration cards for essential goods should be dismantled.

- D. ABOLISH "POPULAR ANTI-SOMOCISTA TRIBUNALS"

These tribunals operate in secrecy and are not bound by conventional rules and enjoy absolute discretion concerning the admissibility of evidence and the criteria needed to infer guilt.

- E. RESCINDING ARBITRARY PRESIDENTIAL CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS AND OTHER ANTI-DEMOCRATIC FEATURES IN THE CONSTITUTION

III. ABILITY OF CITIZENS TO EXERCISE RIGHTS

- A. LIFT STATE OF EMERGENCY AND OTHER LEGAL RESTRICTIONS ON HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

The March 1982 State of Emergency Decree and the expanded State of Emergency announced in October 1985 suspend virtually all the provisions of the "Statute on the Rights and Guarantees of Nicaraguans" which was formally enacted by the junta shortly after coming to power in 1979. Other decrees, for example, suspend the right to strike and limit press freedom.

- B. ESTABLISH JUDICIAL DUE PROCESS

The independence of the judiciary should be restored. Due process should be reinstated, including the right of all prisoners to habeas corpus, to know the charges against them, to appeal to a higher court, to have the right to an attorney, and to not testify against oneself.

- C. BASIC CIVIC AND POLITICAL FREEDOMS REINSTATED, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF PERSON, PRESS, ASSEMBLY, SPEECH, INVIOABILITY OF HOME, FREEDOM FROM WARRANTLESS ARREST

For example, complete media freedom: allow all publications previously shut down to reopen; no prior censorship; no indirect censorship in the form of withholding newsprint and other key supplies, equal access with government media to foreign exchange to import equipment and spare parts; licensing and/or other bureaucratic procedures must be uniformly applied and not create undue burdens.

For example, freedom of political expression: all opposition groups must have access to the media; all groups must have the right to associate, hold public demonstrations, and engage in political campaigning; allow all groups to advertise their meetings and activities; absence of indirect controls on political assembly such as harassment by Sandinista directed mobs; end all harassment of human rights defenders such as the Mothers of Political Prisoners.

IV. ABILITY OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS TO OPERATE

A. LABOR UNIONS

Non-Sandinista labor unions should be issued legal registry. Their right to strike, bargain collectively, demonstrate and hold public meetings should be recognized; end harassment of independent unions.

B. RELIGIONS

For example, reopening the Catholic Church radio station, social welfare office and other religious publications; allow private schools to teach religious courses without government intervention; allow the return of all exiled priests and ministers; allow Protestant evangelicals to proselytize; allow Nicaraguan Jews to return and practice their religion without harassment; end coercion against religious believers to incorporate Sandinista ideology in their teachings.

C. POLITICAL PARTIES, INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS, ETC.

No political party should be denied legal registry. The 1983 Political Parties Law, the 1984 Electoral Laws should be rescinded.

V. DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

As a result of a dialogue between the Sandinista regime and the entire democratic opposition, including a now reintegrated Resistance, competitive, inclusive national elections should be scheduled. Elections should be subject to international observation and verification.